

BRIEFING FOR MEETING YOUR MP

CHANGING MONEY, ONE CONVERSATION AT A TIME.

WE WANT YOU TO:

- Get a date for your meeting
- Find other PM supporters to go with you
- Decide on your goals and your main points for your meeting
- Find the materials you need to make your points
- Tell us all about it

WHY A MEETING WITH YOUR MP IS SO IMPORTANT

Your involvement is essential to the Positive Money campaign. Together we can raise awareness of the issues, encourage debate on money creation and advocate for a fundamental change to the system.

Many of us may have already written to our MPs, this is an important first step. However, we cannot be sure that the MP themselves have seen the correspondence. Often the most junior member of the MP's team will process letters and emails and may try to keep them off the MP's desk if they aren't deemed important enough.

When we have a face-to-face meeting, we know the MP has heard our views.

MPs can assist their constituents in a variety of ways, from making private enquiries on your behalf, to raising matters publicly in the House of Commons and influencing members of their party on key issues.

To see how they can advocate on your behalf see:

<http://www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/what/>

THE GOALS

Positive Money's aim is that politicians will eventually understand how the money system works, how it contributes to many economic and social problems, and support changes to monetary and fiscal policy, including Sovereign Money.

Through trial and error we've identified a possible route map to achieve these goals. To avoid getting into an intellectual debate about the technical details of the banking system, we need to keep MPs on the big picture. We feel it will be more effective to aim to get the MP through the following steps of understanding:

1. Understanding how money is created today
2. Understand that the current system is causing a range of social and economic problems
3. Understanding that this is not the only possible system; there might be better ways to organize our monetary system
4. Understand the proposal to return the power to create money to a democratic body, and to agree that it is a credible idea
5. To actively support Sovereign Money and campaign on this issue.

SETTING UP A MEETING WITH YOUR MP

It is your MP's duty to represent you in parliament and they should be willing to meet you. Sometimes getting a meeting is as simple as just asking for a meeting, you can do this via www.theyworkforyou.com, www.parliament.uk or your MP's personal website where you can book an appointment at one of their surgeries. You can also try phoning them to ask for a meeting through their constituency office number or the commons switchboard (020 7219 3000).

It may take a few emails or letters about the issue before you get a meeting. If you are able to keep going back to your MP with a further question they may request a meeting.

Remember to be polite and constructive: MP's are more likely to respond to positive messages. Don't waste time criticizing their party's policies. Only talk about this one issue in the meeting, as other issues will distract them.

Your meeting will be organised by one of the MP's assistants. Be polite to them - they know how to look after their MP and will warn the MP if they think that you will be a difficult person to deal with. Naturally, you want your MP to meet you without prejudice. The MP's assistants will be quite political aware, potential aspire to become MPs in the future, and so may also take a personal interest in the issue.

SHIRLEY'S EXPERIENCE WITH HER MP

I emailed my MP in 2011 when I first heard about Positive Money. I raised the issue of rising house prices as a main concern. My MP's office emailed back with one of those replies that clearly demonstrated that he (or they) didn't understand how money is created by banks, in the form of debt, or how that had created a housing bubble. At that point I wasn't quite sure how to reply so I left it on the back burner for a while.

Shortly before I started as Network Coordinator at Positive Money, I tried again saying that the previous reply was unconvincing and could we have a meeting. This time I got a reply that has become familiar to me. The reply said he was aware of the backbench debate, but couldn't comment on the Bank of England's view as they are an independent body. He also assured me about things I hadn't asked about.

'With respect to the wider debate about the 'creation of money', though banks maintain a fraction of deposits in cash reserves and lend out the remainder, I can assure you they also remain obliged to redeem all deposits on demand. This system is fundamental to the availability of credit and plays a vital part in supporting the economy..'

Given these assurances did I still want a meeting? I said; 'Yes please!' Yes, because most of the answers in his letter sidestepped the key question about money creation by banks.

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING

CLARITY

You will probably have between 10 and 20 minutes, so go in to your meeting with one or two clear objectives such as:

1. To check that they understand how money is created, and recognize that it's important for MPs to understand this issue. (Our poll shows that they don't.)
2. Getting them to commit to attending the debate about 'Money creation and society led by Steve Baker MP, Caroline Lucas MP and Michael Meacher MP.

TELL YOUR OWN STORY

Remind yourself of how you became interested in monetary reform and why you care. Your personal story will be motivating for you and to the MP. Try to get this down to two minutes or less.

FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR MP

Most MPs have websites that tell you about their interests and activity in the House of Commons. If you know their interests you may be able to anticipate their questions and prepare your conversation around their topics of interest.

They Work For You <http://www.theyworkforyou.com> is a good place to start. You can find your MP's details and their voting history in the House of Parliament. The listings can tell you how strongly they voted on particular subjects. For example if your MP was Jenny Abrahams you could see that she is very interested in reducing inequality. You would be able to prepare your discussion about how banks creating money makes a contribution to higher levels of inequality.

PRACTICE

If possible, have the conversation you hope to have with your MP with a friend or another Positive Money supporter as many times as you can.

Think of your MP as your partner in trying to sort this problem out; whatever their view is, they are your representative in Parliament. Aim at understanding their point of view as well as putting yours across, we need them to have a positive view of you and the perspectives you are supporting.

Remember that MPs are expected to have a view on almost every issue, and that it's impossible for them to be an expert on everything. You can help them by clearly explaining how the system works. But don't criticize them for not being aware of it; many professional economists have a poor understanding of how money works, so we shouldn't expect MPs to be better informed.

STRUCTURE

Here is a way of structuring your conversation, as outlined in Susan Scott's book 'Fierce Conversations.'

THE ISSUE IS

Get straight to the heart of the problem as you see it.

'I am concerned that most MPs don't know that 97% of the money in the UK economy is created by banks when they make loans.'

IT IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE

What is at stake? How does this affect the economy, people, the future, the environment etc. Say why you care.

'This reality, confirmed by the Bank of England, has created a housing bubble and transfers money from the poorer 90% of the population to the top 10%.'

MY IDEAL OUTCOME

What you are asking the MP to do? You'll need to be modest in your goals for a 15 minute meeting.

'I would like your view on this problem.'

'I would like you to raise this issue with the Chancellor'

'I would like you to attend the backbench debate'

'I would like you to consider if our monetary system is organised in the best way.'

REPEAT

When your MP gives you a reply that seems to sidestep the questions and the issues; politely state your main point again, for example:

'I am particularly concerned about the fact that money is created by banks in the form of debt when we take out loans.'

'Can we come back to money creation by banks, confirmed by the Bank of England. It's resulted in a housing bubble and transfers money from the poorer 90% of the population to the top 10%.'

Anyone with political training will be adept at not answering questions directly and trying to divert the conversation onto subjects that they feel more confident discussing. If they move on to an irrelevant point, don't follow them. Say something like "Well, that's interesting, but I'd like to stay on the main issue here...". Then keep coming back to these points rather than following the line that the MP will give you.

TAKE RELEVANT SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Having some relevant material with you at your meeting will help to substantiate your argument and help you stay on topic. You might want to:

Take your laptop, and play What is money? (To download the video so that you don't need to find an internet connection - Right click here and choose 'save target as...')

Give them the 2 page briefing

<https://www.positivemoney.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Positive-Money-Briefing-for-MPs.pdf>

This handout includes quotes from the Bank of England and is an explanation of the issue. (They are unlikely ever to read a book or longer paper, unless they have a very strong interest in finance.)

If your MP is aware of money creation, but does not think it is problem, you can find more detail on the issues on the Positive Money website.

<http://www.positivemoney.org/how-money-works/how-much-money-have-banks-created/>

HOW TO SUPPORT YOURSELF

Take someone else with you. Having another person present will help you keep a record of what was said, you can speak and the person can take notes. It will also provide moral support and back-up – if needed! Some local groups are organising to meet their MP together. If you would like to find someone to go with you get in touch with Shirley (Shirley@positivemoney.org) and we will ask supporters in your constituency.

Be confident in your understanding of money creation: it has been confirmed by the Bank of England. But don't feel you have to be an expert on the technical details of banking.

Also you might find reading the frequently asked questions help you feel more confident, if you are asked questions. <http://www.positivemoney.org/faqs/>

Remember it is fine not to know: you are a constituent with concerns not necessarily an economist.

AFTER THE MEETING

Write to the MP and thank them for their time, summarise your conversation and agreements and include any follow up that they requested, or that you think will be relevant.

We are interested to hear what your MP says during the meeting. By collating the MP's arguments and questions we can share our experiences, think about relevant counter-arguments and meet the concerns and questions that MPs have.

It is possible that we may be able to identify what the steps are to an MP changing their minds about monetary reform. If we can do this together we will have made an amazing contribution to the future prosperity and fairness of Britain.

Positive Money
205 Davina House
137-149 Goswell Road
London
EC1V 7ET

Tel: +44 (0)207 253 3235

info@positivemoney.org

www.positivemoney.org

PositiveMoney 

Positive Money is a not-for-profit company limited
by guarantee, registered in England and Wales.
Company number 07253015